

# Griffon Soldiers take unique approach to safety training

Spc. Jason Dangel  
4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

For most Soldiers, a “safety stand-down day” means one thing: a long boring day of safety briefs and long lectures from their leaders in an effort to mitigate risky behavior within the ranks of a unit. Most Soldiers will heed the advice given by leaders; however, there are those who find themselves dipping in and out of consciousness as slides flicker across a projector screen.

In an effort to ensure and incorporate safety into the fabric of daily operations and keep everyone adamant about risk management, Soldiers from the 4th Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, took a unique approach to learning during a divisionwide Safety Day May 24.

With the help of Trooper Mike Perez, a Texas State Highway Patrolman, “Griffon” Soldiers participated in various events focused around Driving Under the Influence and Seatbelt Awareness Training in preparation for the long Memorial Day Weekend.

“We identified this weekend as a critical weekend for the safety of our Soldiers,” explained Lt. Col. Joseph Gandara, commander, 4th STB.

“The day before the long weekend, we wanted to do something that would bring awareness to the most critical pieces of safety issues that we have with Soldiers, and that is a combination of events: one of which is alcohol when its connected to some other kind of activity,” he continued.

The day's events ranged from standard briefings on driving and alcohol safety, as well as hands-on activities, to include a vehicle roll-over simulator, a mock DUI arrest scenario, and an obstacle course where Soldiers tested their skills on tricycles while wearing goggles that mimicked the effect of an intoxicated individual.

"Keeping the Soldiers educated on safety and the law is the best way to make sure they understand that there are consequences for their actions," explained Perez, a 27-year veteran of the Texas State Highway Patrol.

Perez, who grew up in a military family in Killeen, explained that the number-one offense on the road is speeding, and speeding combined with alcohol consumption is the result of most fatal accidents on the highway.

"Every life is precious," Perez said. "If what we say here today only affects one Soldier, and it results in a saved life, we did our job."

The highlight of the day's events took place as the whole battalion watched on as Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Eger, the battalion's new top enlisted leader, was detained by Perez in a DUI-arrest scenario.

The scenario showed Soldiers the exact repercussions for service members if they are arrested for driving while intoxicated.

For the Soldiers of the Griffon Battalion, as well as the brigade as a whole, the training marked the second day-long safety training event in as many weeks – but the buck doesn't stop there.

In accordance with the safety program guidance provided by Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, the 4th Infantry Division's commanding general, all units within the

division are required to conduct safety training for at least 90 minutes, once per week, before Soldiers are released for the weekend.

“Our battalion has an excellent safety record,” explained 2nd Lt. Steven Loos, Company A, 4th STB. “However, our safety day will help to ensure we are in compliance with the standard set forth by the commanding general – and the bottom line is, we want everyone to be safe.”

“As leaders, it’s our job to know what our Soldiers are doing and arm them with the knowledge to keep them safe. Let’s face it: ‘Joe’ is going to do what he does, and as leaders, no matter what unit he or she is in, it’s our job to keep our Soldiers’ heads on straight and keep them safe.”

As force protection and risk mitigation remains high priority within the ranks of the “Ivy” Division, leaders from the Griffon Battalion said they are committed in ensuring the safety of all their Soldiers.

“As a commander, we are always looking for the next accident, and we are always trying to be proactive, and that is what the Safety Day concept is all about,” Gandara said.

“Leaders have to engage their Soldiers and take the necessary steps to stop an accident from happening before it happens,” he continued. “Every Soldier has their place and is important to the collective mission – and frankly, we can’t afford to lose anyone from one careless decision.”



**Beer Goggles.**

Sgt. Daniel Campos, mechanic, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, tries his best to negotiate an obstacle course while wearing "beer goggles" during the "Griffon" Battalion's Safety Day May 24.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Dangel, 4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.)



**Trooper speaks to Griffon Soldiers.**

Trooper Mike Perez, a Texas State Highway Patrolman speaks to Soldiers of the 4th Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division about staying safe on the roads during the battalion's Safety Day May 24.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Dangel, 4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.)



**CSM arrested.**

Trooper Mike Perez, a Texas State Highway Patrolman, arrests Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Eger, 4th Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, during a mock Driving Under the Influence arrest scenario during the Griffon Battalion's Safety Day May 24.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Dangel, 4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.)